

The Filipino Twins



Lucy · Fitch · Perkins

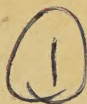




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By Lucy Fitch Perkins

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THE FILIPINO TWINS

By Lucy Fitch Perkins

ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHOR



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1923

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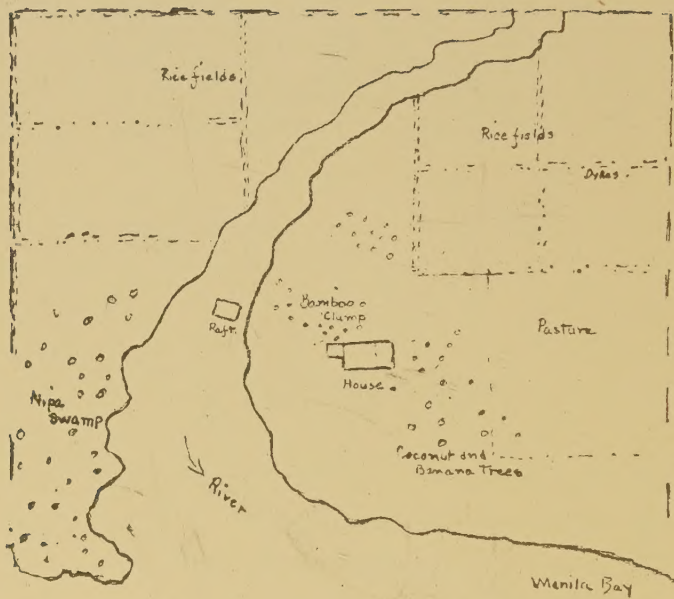
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PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.



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THE FILIPINO TWINS





This is a picture of the little farm-house where the Filipino Twins live. It stands right on the shore of Manila Bay. A river runs by it and empties itself into the bay. There are fish and turtles and crabs in the river. There are more and bigger fish in the bay.

Back of the house there is a pasture and a rice-field. Across the river are swamps where there are mangrove trees and nipa palms, and, if you will believe it, bananas and coconuts grow right in the yard!



This is a fishing-raft which once belonged to the Twins' father. He kept it tied to a coconut tree at the river's edge. You can see the place on the map. There was a little tiny house like a tent in the middle of the raft. It was covered with nipa thatch like the roof of the farm-house. Once the Twins and their mother went fishing with their father and stayed out all night. It was a very exciting night, as you will see when you read the story



Here are the Twins who live in the little farmhouse on the bay. Their names are Ramon¹ and Rita.² They are on their way home from school. They are hungry. Ramon is telling Rita what he hopes their mother will cook for supper. He says he hopes she will cook a great deal of it, whatever it is.

¹ Pronounced Rah-mon'.

² Pronounced Ree'-ta.



This is the Twins' mother. Her name is Petra.¹ She is sitting out of doors embroidering pretty white leaves on a piece of white cloth. She is thinking about what she will cook for supper. She knows it is almost supper-time because the shadow of the bamboo trees is long on the grass.

¹ Pronounced Pā'tra.



This is the father of Ramon and Rita. His name is Felix Santos.¹ He is tired, for he has just come back from plowing in the hot rice-field. He has unhitched old Bobtail, the carabao, from the plow and shut him up in the pasture. Now he is going out to feed the pigs and milk the goat. In the basket on his arm there is rice-dust for the pigs.

¹ Pronounced Fā'-leex Sahn'-tōs.



This is old Bobtail, the carabao, with his friend the white heron on his back. When she is not with old Bobtail the heron flies away to the mangrove swamp across the river, but no one has ever yet found her nest. She likes to ride on Bobtail's back. Bobtail likes to have her, because she catches the flies and bugs that always swarm about him. Bobtail is tired from the plowing, too, so he has broken out of his pasture and is going to the river to rest himself by wallowing in the mud.



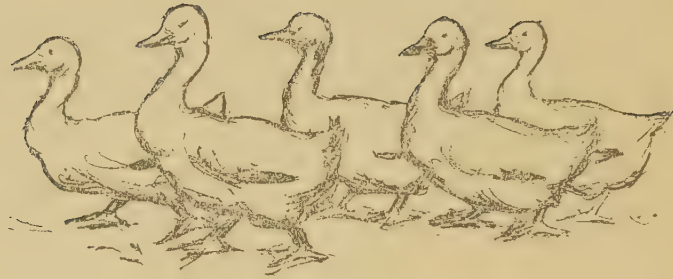
This is Dingo, the Twins' dog. Their teacher named him Dingo when he was a puppy. Dingo is a yellow dog. The teacher said that was why she named him Dingo. Ramon and Rita could not see why that was a reason, but they called him Dingo just the same. Dingo hears the Twins coming home from school; so he is running to meet them, barking and wagging his tail.



This is Fatty, the pig, with her six little pigs. They belong to the Twins' father. They are running because they hear him coming and they know it is supper-time. They are all squealing like everything.



This is the goat, and her little kid. The Twins call her "Maah" because that is the sound she makes. She is saying it now in the picture. The kid has n't any name because it is so very new that the Twins have not thought of a name yet.



Here are the ducks. They are hungry, too. They are going down to the river to hunt for bugs and little frogs for their supper.

I

OLD BOBTAIL'S TEMPER



I

OLD BOBTAIL'S TEMPER

"SANTA MARIA!" said the Twins' mother, getting up from her seat under a coconut tree and going up the steps into her little kitchen. "Felix is already back from the field, and it is time the children were home from school! They are late and they will be very hungry. I must make a fire at once. Then, when they come, it will not take long to cook the rice."

She started to make a fire, but there was no wood in the kitchen. So she climbed down the steps again, and went under the house. The house was set up on high posts, and under it there was always a pile of dry guava branches and mangrove wood for fuel.

Dingo lived under the house, too, when he was at home, and there were baskets

there besides, and a heap of peanut straw. There were also an old farm cart and a pile of boards. Two hens had already gone to roost on the wood-pile.

“Shoo!” said the Twins’ mother, flapping her skirt at them.

When they fled squawking, she gathered a bundle of sticks in her arms and toiled up to her kitchen again.

“Ramon must bring up some wood for me as soon as he comes home,” she said aloud to herself when she reached the kitchen. She threw the sticks down on the floor and prepared to make a fire.

The stove was just a long box standing on four legs. It was filled with earth. First she put three stones together on top of the earth, like this   Then she piled sticks between  the stones and lighted them. She washed four handfuls of rice and put them in an earthen pot. Then she filled the pot with water from a long hollow bamboo tube and set it on the stones. Soon the fire was crackling merrily and the steam

was sailing in little clouds up into the thatch of the roof above her head.

When all this was done, she looked out of the window, — at least she tried to, but she could n't see out because the window was closed and there was no glass in it. Instead of glass there were little thin shells set in a sliding frame, and of course she could not see through that. She pushed back the shell window and looked out. She heard Dingo barking. Then she heard voices. Then she saw Ramon and Rita coming along the shore of the bay, with Dingo jumping up to give them dog kisses. She ran out to meet them and give them mother kisses too. Then they all came back into the kitchen together.

When Ramon had brought up more wood from under the house, he said to his mother, "Manang" (that was their pet name for her), "I am so hungry I could eat a plate of rice as big as this house!"

"So could I," Rita chimed in.

"Ay! What shall I do!" cried their

mother, throwing up her hands in mock despair. "There is not so much as a single roomful cooking in the pot." She smiled down at them and added, "But, my nenes" (that was her pet name for them), "may it not be that your eyes hold more than your stomachs? I put four handfuls in the pot. It would be sad indeed to see you burst yourselves."

Rita peeped into the pot. "There is no danger of our bursting ourselves, if that's all you are going to cook," she cried. "I could eat every bit of that myself."

This time their mother did not smile at them. "It is all we can spare to-day," she said. "Our rice-bags are nearly empty, and there will be no more rice until after harvest, and Father has only just plowed the field for the new crop. Last year's harvest was poor, you know, and if we are not careful, we shall soon have to go without any rice at all."

The Twins stared at their mother.

"But, Manang, we cannot live without

rice! We have it every single meal," said Ramon.

His mother pinched his cheek. "You have not gone hungry yet," she said, "and if we are careful, and if Father has good luck with his fishing, we shall have enough to eat, even if we do have very little rice." She took down her frying-pan as she spoke and began to make another fire. "See, greedy ones," she said, "I will fry some bananas for you, and if you think that will not be enough, you may run down to the river and see if you cannot find some crabs."

"There are some crab-holes near the fishing-raft," said Ramon. "Come on, Rita." And the two children ran at once down to the river-edge, followed by Dingo, barking joyfully and running round them in circles.

"Take off your shoes!" their mother called after them. "If you don't, you will get them wet and muddy, and you must keep them nice for school."

The Twins sat down at once and took



off their shoes. They left them at the foot of a coconut tree and ran along the river-bank to the place where the raft was tied. When they got there, they began to poke about in the mud looking for the crab-holes. A turtle, which had been sunning itself on a log near by, slid into the water with a splash. A little fish swam slowly down stream among the reeds near the shore. The children saw both the turtle and the fish, but not a single crab could they find. In vain Ramon lay on his stomach on the bank and poked about in the river mud with a

stick, getting his arms smeared with black to the elbows. At last he rose to his knees in disgust.

"May the plague take all crabs!" he said to Rita. "I'm not going to poke about here any more. There are n't any here, anyway. I'm going farther up the river and try again. Come along." He sprang to his feet, and the two trotted away up stream, with Dingo at their heels.

Soon they came to the place where old Bobtail, the carabao, was wallowing and splashing about in the muddy water. The flies, as usual, were buzzing about him in swarms, and the white heron was on his back gobbling them up. The ducks were swimming near by. They were catching flies, too.

Dingo did not like Bobtail. Once, when he had barked at him, old Bobtail had chased him so that Dingo had had to run for his life. He had jumped over a bamboo fence on to a young maguety plant. The sharp spines of the maguety had stuck into

Dingo. As soon as he could pick himself up he had run home with his tail between his legs, yelping all the way, and had hidden himself under the house to nurse his wounds. Ever since that time he had not liked Bobtail.

Now, when he saw the carabao deep in the mud and water, he thought his chance had come. He knew he could run away before old Bobtail could climb out of the mud and run after him. So he jumped about on the bank and barked and barked. He meant to make old Bobtail think he was a very dangerous dog indeed, who would like nothing better than to snap off his head at one bite.

Old Bobtail was a gentle beast nearly all the time, but he did not like Dingo any better than Dingo liked him, so he began to climb right out of the water, grunting and wallowing about in a way to scare even an elephant or a tiger if there had been any such beasts about, which of course there were not.

The white heron screamed and flew away to the mangrove swamp with her long legs streaming out behind her. The ducks swam up the river as fast as they could go, and as for Dingo and the Twins, they ran like a streak of lightning for home. Of course Dingo got there first. He ran under the house, and was already hidden beneath the farm wagon when the Twins scrambled up the steps and dashed into the kitchen.

"Oh! Oh!" cried their mother, "you can't have caught any crabs in this time! Why are you back so soon?"

She looked up from her frying-pan and saw their scared faces. She heard Dingo whining under the house.

"What in the world is the matter?" she cried, gazing at them in surprise.

"Bobtail!" gasped the terror-stricken Twins. "He chased us! He's mad as anything!"

Their mother dropped the banana she was just about to put in the frying-pan. "Where is he now?" she asked. "He must



have broken down the fence, for your father put him in the pasture when he came back from the field."

She ran to the door and looked out. There was Bobtail in the dooryard, dripping with mud and grunting with rage.

"The saints preserve us, the beast has

gone mad!" she cried, slamming the door shut, as if she thought he might try to climb the steps and come into the kitchen. "He has been dragging the plow all day in the rice-field. Perhaps the heat has crazed him! He may run away and get himself stolen! Ay! Whatever should we do without old Bobtail? Your father could not finish plowing the field nor carry our rice to market when it is grown, and Heaven knows how we should live at all if anything should happen to our rice crop this year, too! Where is your father?"

"We don't know. We haven't seen him," wailed the Twins.

Their mother ran to the front of the house, slid back the shell window, and looked out. There, directly before her, lay the blue waters of Manila Bay, dotted with the sails of fishing-boats. Of course, her husband was not there. She looked to the left. There was the shore-line stretching along the bay, but there was no one in sight. She looked to the right, across the river

which emptied itself into the bay not far from the house. There was the fishing-raft safely tied to the coconut tree, but Felix was not on the raft.

"Ay! Ay!" she cried to the children. "Your father is nowhere to be seen!"

She ran to the kitchen window and called, "Felix! Felix!"

The Twins stuck their heads out too and shouted, "Father! Father!"

When he heard their voices, Dingo under the house gave a mournful howl. Old Bobtail heard him, and the voice of his enemy seemed to rouse him to fresh fury. There was a ring in his nose and a rope was fastened to the ring. The rope had been tied to one of his horns to keep it out of the way, but in his fit of temper it had become loosened and now was hanging on the ground. When Dingo howled, old Bobtail shook his head angrily and started toward the house. In doing so he stepped on the rope and pulled his own nose. This was too much!

Maybe he thought Dingo had pulled his nose. Anyway, he gave a savage grunt and plunged forward as if he meant to find him. He was too big to get under the house, and besides there was a bamboo lattice to keep him out, but he put his head down and looked through the opening by the kitchen steps. When Dingo saw the carabao's nose so near him, he yelped as if he had fallen again on a maguey plant. Then he dashed through a hole in the lattice on the opposite side of the house and never stopped running until he was out of sight. He ran through the coconut grove, past the clump of banana trees, past the bamboos along the river, and sat down at last with his tongue hanging out, on top of a little hill back of the rice-field.

Just then around the corner of the house came the Twins' father, carrying the empty basket in one hand and in the other the bamboo pail which held the milk. When he saw the basket old Bobtail thought there might be something good to eat in it; so

he came lumbering along toward his master.

"Come in, come in quick!" screamed the children and their mother. "He's as mad as he can be!" They thought old Bobtail might try to toss Felix up in the air, as carabaos sometimes do when they are angry.

But Felix was not afraid. He held out the basket, and the great beast stopped and sniffed at it. "Poor old Bobtail!" said Felix, "it was hot in the rice-field; was n't it?"

"He chased us!" cried Rita.

"We ran home as fast as we could," shouted Ramon.

"Dingo barked at him," explained the mother. "It made Bobtail angry, and now Dingo has run away."

Felix handed the milk to Petra. "Bring me some water," he said to Ramon.

Ramon ran into the kitchen and brought out a long bamboo tube filled with water. His father emptied it on the carabao's back, then old Bobtail acted as pleased as a cat when its fur is stroked.



"He is quiet enough now," said Felix. "It was only a passing fit of anger. He was hot and tired, and that pest of a Dingo must have driven him wild. He deserves a beating. Come, Ramon, there is no more danger. Climb up on his back and drive him to pasture."

Ramon was used to taking care of the carabao and, no longer afraid of him, he ran down the steps, seized Bobtail's stumpy tail, and planting one foot firmly against his hind leg, climbed to a seat on his broad back. His father took the rope's end in his hand and started toward the pasture. Good-tempered, lazy, and slow-moving once more, the carabao followed patiently after him.

Rita and her mother watched them from the kitchen door, and when they saw that all danger was past, turned back to the stove where their supper was cooking. Alas! it was not cooking any more. The fire had gone out and the rice was only half done.

Rita ran for more sticks, her mother blew on the coals and fed the flames with dry leaves and twigs, and soon the pot was bubbling away merrily again.

Ramon and his father were gone for some time, for they had to mend the bamboo fence around the pasture where old Bobtail had broken through. When they came home, supper was waiting for them,

and, although there was not as much rice as they would have liked, there were plenty of fried bananas, and Petra had also cooked some dried fish, since there were no crabs.





II

THE RAIN AND THE RICE- PLANTING



II

THE RAIN AND THE RICE- PLANTING

IN the middle of the night it began to rain for the first time in many months. First there was a whisper of wind in the nipa thatch of the little farm-house. Then a few drops came pattering down. They came faster and faster, and soon it seemed as if the very sky were falling.

Felix Santos woke up and turned over on his bed, which was just a mat spread on the floor, and said to his wife: "It is a lucky thing I have already cleaned and plowed the rice-field. The rains are beginning early this year."

At least he thought he said it to her, but there was no answer. Petra was n't there.

Just then a stream of water trickled through a hole in the thatch above his head

and splashed directly on his nose. He bounced up in bed at once and mopped his face with his sleeve.

"Where are you, Petra?" he called, but Petra did not hear him because at that moment she was struggling with the kitchen window, which she had left open.

The rain was spattering all over the stove, and the wind blew so she had hard work to slide the window shut.

The room was dark except when it was lighted by a flash of lightning. Felix got up and pulled his mat out of the way of the leak and then started toward the kitchen to see what had become of Petra.

He walked slowly, groping about with his arms lest he should run into something in the dark.

By this time Petra had got the window shut and was now on her way back to bed. She too was walking slowly with her arms out.

"Felix is certainly a wonderful sleeper," she said to herself as she groped her way

along. "I believe if the sky itself were to fall and break in pieces on the roof it would not wake him! It's a lucky thing I remembered about that window or everything would have been soaked through by morning."

Just at that minute she bumped into something large and soft and alive! She was so startled that she did not think at all! She just opened her mouth and screamed: "Murder! Help! Felix, where are you?"

Of course, Felix knew it was Petra the moment she bumped into him, and he seized her to keep her from falling, but she had already lost her balance. The next instant his foot caught on the edge of the mat and he lost his. He folded up like a jack-knife and sat down suddenly with Petra on top of him.

Then came a flash of lightning and a clap of thunder so loud that it shook the house, and Petra rolled over and sat up on the floor.



"Oh! it was you!" she cried.

"Of course!" said Felix grumpily. He did n't like being knocked over and sat upon in the dark. "Who else could it be? I got up to pull the sleeping-mat out of the way of the rain. It leaked through and fell on my nose."

"I know where the leak is," said Petra, "for there's a stream running down my back and I'm sitting in the puddle this very minute! What a mess! Strike a light, my angel, or I shall be drowned! I don't dare move until I can see where I'm going."

Felix picked himself up and, stepping very cautiously, began to hunt about for matches, and, after running against the chest where their clothes were kept and barking his shins, he finally succeeded in finding them.

At one side of the room there was a little shrine where there was an image of the Madonna. Before it was a tiny taper floating in a cup of coconut-oil, but the taper was not lighted.

"We must keep the lamp burning before the blessed Virgin," said Petra. "It must have been blown out by the wind." And, wet as she was, she took a match from Felix, struck it on the floor, and once more lighted the tiny lamp on the household altar.

By its dim light she mopped up the pool of water on the floor, set an earthen pot under the leak, looked at the two children asleep on their mats, and, having put on dry clothing, settled herself once more for the night.

The next morning, though the rain had

ceased, it was plain that the storm was not over. The water dripped from the thatch and dashed down in little showers whenever a gust of wind shook the leaves, and threatening clouds were still scudding across the sky.

Felix and Petra rose early, and while he milked the goat and fed the farm animals, she went to the kitchen to start the fire and get the breakfast. But the stove was damp and the little pile of kindling was wet too, in spite of her having shut the window in the night. It was some time before she could coax a blaze. The sticks sizzled and smouldered, filling the kitchen with smoke and making her eyes smart. The smoke sifted through the cracks in the partition and made all the air blue.

The Twins woke sneezing and, being eager to get out of the smother, sprang up at once without waiting to be called. They dressed in record time, rolled up their sleeping-mats, and raced out of doors into the fresh air. Dingo, who had passed a melan-

choly night alone under the house, came bounding to meet them, wagging the whole back of himself for joy, and the three ran away together to hunt eggs and feed the chickens before breakfast.

When at last the rice was cooked and the family were seated at the table, there was a sound of wet feet pattering up the kitchen steps and Dingo's head appeared in the doorway. In his mouth he carried a water-soaked and dripping shoe!

When they saw it, the Twins clasped their hands in dismay. "Our shoes, our shoes," they wailed. "We left them under the coconut tree yesterday when we went to hunt crabs! We never thought about rain."

"And now look at them!" groaned their mother.

The children did not wait to see what else she might say. They dashed out of the house and down to the coconut tree at once. There were their shoes, all soppy with water, lying just where they had left them!

Ramon picked them up and emptied the water out of the toes, and very sadly the two children returned to the kitchen. Their mother stood in the door holding the fourth shoe in her hand.

"It's a lucky thing for you," she said sternly to the Twins, "that it is Saturday. If it were a school day you would have to go barefooted to school."

The children were very miserable. Without a word they hung the dripping shoes in a row on a clothes-line over the stove in the kitchen to dry, and, when breakfast was over, flew remorsefully to help their mother do the house-work. Rita washed the dishes and put them away in the cupboard, while Ramon swept the steps and rubbed the floor-boards with banana leaves to make them shine. He liked to do this because he could put the juicy banana leaves under his feet and polish the floors just by skating on them.

When this was done, he went to the river and filled the long bamboo tubes in

which the water-supply for the household was kept, brought them back, and stood them up in a row in the kitchen ready for use.

By the time these things were done the rain had begun again. The next day it still rained, but on Monday morning when Felix opened the door and looked out, the round red face of the sun was peering over the crest of the Sierra Madre, the mountains which lie along the eastern coast of Luzon. Its first level rays touched the tops of the coconut trees and lit the feathery bamboos with rosy color. Every rain-washed leaf glistened with moisture and danced in the breeze, and the rice-fields were drowned in water.

"A good day for the rice-planting," said Felix to himself, "and, thanks be to God, the field is cleaned and ready." And then, even before he fed the pigs and milked the goat, he went out to his seed-beds to see if the young rice-plants were ready to be set out.

When he came in again he said to Petra, "Wake the children and get ready to go to the rice-field as soon as possible."

"But it is a school day!" said Petra.

"I am sorry to keep them out," Felix answered, "but they must help with the transplanting, even if it is a school day. The plants are ready and must be set out at once and I cannot afford any other help."

The children heard him and bounced up at once. They loved school, but they loved the rice-planting season too, for then they could wade about in the water all day long, and they liked that almost as well as old Bobtail himself. While their father was taking the young plants out of the seed-bed, cutting off the tops and arranging them in handfuls ready to carry to the field, they helped their mother in the house, and in a little while the whole family, including Dingo, were ready for a long day's work out of doors.

When they reached the rice-paddy, they



walked to the farther end of the field upon a little ridge of earth which separated their land from their neighbors'. These ridges not only served to mark the boundaries of the fields, but made it possible for the farm-

ers to govern their water-supply. They were really little dykes, which crossed the land at right angles and made it look like a giant checkerboard.

Felix set his basket down on the ridge and, giving a handful of rice-plants to each of the children and to Petra, waded into the water. They had already tucked their clothes high about their legs, and in a few moments father, mother, and children were all standing in water halfway up to the knees. One at a time, they plunged the rice-plant roots down into the mud, leaving the green stalks just showing above the water-level. They were the earliest family to begin work, but soon other families appeared in other fields and there was laughter and chattering back and forth among neighbors and friends as they all bent to their task.

The sun mounted higher and higher. The mosquitoes buzzed about them, and steamy vapor rose in little clouds from the wet fields. It was hard, hot work, but after

a while some one began to sing. Other voices took up the strain, and soon all the people stooped and rose and stooped again in time to the music, at each bow leaving a plant with its roots set firmly in the mud.

The Twins worked faithfully with the others until nearly noon. Then every one went home for food and to take a nap, and for two hours the rice-field was deserted. When the sun was lowering toward the west and the heat was not quite so great, they all came back again and worked until sunset.

Petra left the field in the afternoon earlier than the others, and when Felix and the Twins came trailing into the yard, she poked her head out of the window and called to them: "I've milked the goat and fed the pigs. You go take a dip in the bay and then come in to supper."

There was a little strip of sandy beach in front of the house. In two minutes Felix and the Twins were splashing about in the water. They didn't even stop to take off their clothes. They wore very few gar-

ments, and as they were all wet and muddy anyway, they washed themselves and their clothes at the same time, and oh! how good the cool water felt after their day in the hot field!

When they had eaten their supper, the whole family went down to the river and sat on the raft to rest. They watched the fireflies sparkling in the trees like thousands of Christmas candles, and saw the clouds roll up over the dark sky, blotting out the stars, and listened to the soft lapping of the water on the shore, until the first drops of rain began to fall.



III

DINGO AND THE LITTLE BROWN HEN



III

DINGO AND THE LITTLE BROWN HEN

ALL the next day the children helped again in the rice-field, and they went to bed at sundown in order to be ready to get up early, because the next day after that they must go to school again, and the morning session began at half past seven.

They were just rubbing their eyes and yawning to wake themselves up, when suddenly under the house there was a queer sound. Ramon heard it first and sat bolt upright on his mat to listen. Then he rolled off and began to jump into his clothes. The noise kept on — “Cluck, cluck, cluck, peep, peep, peep; cluck, cluck, cluck, peep, peep, peep,” it went.

Rita heard it, too, and by this time was scrambling into her clothes so fast she put

her dress on wrong side out. But she did not stop to do it over; instead she dashed out of the kitchen door and down the steps and under the house, almost tumbling over Ramon in order to get there as soon as he did. They were just in time to see a little brown hen come out from behind the pile of peanut straw leading a brood of little tiny chickens.

"Oh, Mother, Mother!" screamed Rita. "Come here quick!"

Petra was in the kitchen right above their heads. The kitchen floor was made of narrow strips of bamboo with cracks between, so she peeped down through the cracks instead of going down the steps. She could see the little chicks running about and see the beautiful golden brown color of the mother hen.

"How many chicks has she?" she called down.

"They run about so I can't count them, but I think there are ten anyway," Ramon shouted back.

"Here is something for them to eat," cried Petra, and she dropped a few crumbs through the cracks of the floor. The mother hen said, "Quick, quick, quick," to her babies. She picked up the crumbs in her bill and dropped them again to teach the little ones how to eat.

"Oh!" cried Rita, clasping her hands with delight. "Is n't she a clever little hen? She hid herself away in the straw, and we did n't know she had a nest there at all."

"She always came out to eat when I fed the other chickens, so I never missed her," said Ramon, his face beaming with pride. "She's a sly one."

They could hardly tear themselves away from this delightful surprise, and all the morning in school their thoughts were with the new family at home.

At five o'clock that afternoon they came bounding into the yard, their eyes shining with excitement.

"Oh, Mother, Mother," cried Ramon, "what do you think is going to happen?"

The teacher says that when the rice is harvested there is going to be a great celebration in the village and there are going to be prizes for the best work done by the children this summer all by themselves. We can raise chickens, or make gardens, or do anything we want to, and all the things we do will be exhibited in the schoolhouse, and, oh, Mother, may I have the brown hen and her brood for my very own, and take care of them all myself, so I can show them and maybe get a prize?"

"And, Mother, I'm going to weave a basket, all by myself!" cried Rita. "It's going to be made of little teeny, tiny strips of bamboo such as they use for weaving hats, and there are going to be butterflies woven in a black pattern on the edge! I thought it all out in school."

The children's mother could do a great many things. She could weave fine sinamay cloth on the loom, which stood in the corner of the room. She could embroider beautiful patterns on pineapple cloth. She

could also weave mats and baskets and hats and she had taught Rita to weave a little bit, too. At school Rita had learned still more from the Maestra,¹ and now she thought she could make a basket all by herself.

"You may have the brown hen and her brood," said his mother to Ramon, "and you, Rita, may make your basket, only you will have to wait until we can get the material for it."

"When I go to school, I can get it," cried Rita, "and I know just what I want. It's going to be straw-color and black. The butterflies are to be black and I shall make them out of the stems of the nito vine!"

Ramon set to work at once to make a coop for his chickens. He took a box which he found under the house and nailed bamboo slats across the front. Part of the bottom was gone, but he put some peanut straw on what was left of the floor for a

¹ Pronounced mah-es'tra.



nest. Then he and Rita tried to catch the little hen and put her in the new house.

But the little hen had her own views about being caught and shut up in a coop. She did n't like the idea at all. She walked away, clucking to her brood, and hid herself under the pile of boards beneath the house. In vain Ramon scattered grain before her hiding-place to tempt her to come out. She would not budge.

At last, in despair, Ramon said: "I'm

going to send Dingo under there to drive her out. If I don't shut her up, she'll stray away by herself and lose half the brood as likely as not. Besides, I want to feed them a great deal so they will be big and fat by harvest time."

"Don't you do it," said Rita. "You know very well what a blunderbuss Dingo is! He'll step on the little chickens and kill them. Dingo is a dear dog but he has n't much sense."

Dingo, hearing his name spoken, pricked up his ears and came bounding to Ramon's side. He grinned with his head on one side, his tail wagging and his eyes saying as plainly as words: "What is it, master? I'll do anything you say."

Ramon bent down and pointed under the pile of boards. "Go fetch them!" he cried.

The boards were piled up in such a way that there was a small tunnel running under them from one end to the other. This was so they would not rot from lying on the ground.

Ramon thought if he sent Dingo in at one end of the tunnel the little hen and her brood would surely come out at the other. Dingo thought so, too. "Bow-wow, bow-wow," said Dingo, and he crawled into the hole until nothing but his tail, still wagging briskly, was to be seen.

Then, all of a sudden, his tone changed. Instead of "bow-wow, bow-wow" there came a very surprised and pained "ki-yi, ki-yi," from under the boards; his tail curled up between his legs, and he backed out of the tunnel faster than he had gone in! His ears were drooping and his nose was bloody.

No little brown hen came out at the farther end of the boards. Instead, there was an angry pecking sound from under the fortress, and a worried clucking.

Poor Dingo went away under the kitchen steps and rubbed his nose with his paws. He looked reproachfully at Ramon when he came to comfort him.

"It's not a bit of use," said Rita. "You'll

just have to leave her alone until morning. She has put her babies to bed for the night."

Petra heard them talking under the house. She bent down and called through the cracks, "Come to supper."

Ramon sniffed the air, "I smell camotes,"¹ he said. "I don't suppose there 's any rice at all to-night, or Mother would n't be cooking camotes. Oh, dear! how long will it be before harvest?"

Rita looked wise, and counted on her fingers. "Let 's see, it's July now, then comes August, and September, and October. It will be four months more, anyway!"

Ramon groaned, with his hand on his stomach. "When harvest comes," he said, "I'm going to have all the rice I want for once. I'm going to boil a potful for myself and eat it all, every bit. I'm going to have chicken with it, too. I tell you, Rita," he added confidentially, "I just hate being poor. When I grow up I'm going to be

¹ Pronounced cah-mo'-tays.

rich and I'm going to have every single thing I like to eat every day."

"Shame on you, you greedy boy," said Rita piously. "You haven't gone hungry yet, even if you haven't had everything you want. We could be a lot poorer than we are. Why can't you think about something else besides your stomach?"

Ramon could not think of a good answer; so he ran out his tongue at Rita! Yes, he did! "You need n't think you are such a lot better than I am," he said. "You feel just the same way yourself! You know you do!"

"Children, come to supper," Petra called again, and the two dashed upstairs without finishing the dispute.



IV
FISHING



IV

FISHING

WHEN the first rooster crowed the next morning, Ramon woke up and crept down the stairs in the dark so as to be sure to get ahead of the little hen. He blocked one end of the tunnel with straw and then sat patiently on the pile of boards with Dingo beside him until he heard her first cluck, then he crept stealthily to the other end of the tunnel with his coop. When she came out, he clapped the open part down over her and made her a prisoner.

The little hen was furious. She ruffled her neck feathers and scolded, and pecked at Ramon as hard as she could. Once she pecked his thumb. Ramon stuck his thumb in his mouth and danced with pain. He knew just how Dingo had felt the night before. As for Dingo, he was nowhere to be

seen, for at the first glimpse of the little hen he had fled.

Ramon moved the box slowly, scraping it along the ground. The hen had to walk along inside of it, though she did n't want to a bit. She clucked frantically to her chicks and scolded all the way. Ramon placed the box on some fresh green grass in the yard, put a dish of water where the mother hen and all the chicks could reach it, and scattered rice-dust on the ground for them to eat.

At breakfast that morning Rita said: "I've been thinking a lot about my basket, Mother, and I'm not going to buy the material for it. I'm going to fix it myself and save money."

"It takes a long while to get the bamboo ready," said her mother. "If you do it all yourself, it will be some time before you can begin weaving."

"I know," said Rita, "but the exhibition won't be until harvest time, and that's a long way off."

"It is," groaned Ramon.

(His portion of rice that morning had been very small.)

"And besides," Rita went on, "I can work ever so hard when I do begin, — and if I do it all myself, the basket will be my very own. It will be more my own than Ramon's chickens will ever be his, for he did n't even set the hen! She set herself."

"Pooh," said Ramon, "anyway, chickens are alive, and live things are lots better than an old basket any day."

"It is n't an old basket," said Rita hotly. "It's a lovely new basket!"

There might have been a quarrel right there if their mother had not said, "Gently, gently! It is n't any kind of a basket at all yet, you know."

"Well," said Rita proudly. "It's going to be one! You'll see!"

"Pooh," said Ramon again. "You'll never finish it, even if you begin. It will take all summer, and you know very well

you give up if things are hard to do and you get tired."

Rita buttoned up her lips and, though she did n't say a word, she looked volumes at Ramon. She made up her mind right then that, no matter what happened, she would finish that basket. She would show Ramon whether she could stick to a task or not!

So she went out that very morning to hunt for young bamboo stems. Before it was time to go to school, she had found six long, slender green stalks and had put them under the house to wither in the shade. Every day on her way to and from school, she hunted for more, and it was not long before she had quite a bundle of them. Then one Saturday she set to work with her knife and cut and split the bamboo stems into narrow thin strips. Even then they were not ready for weaving. They still had to be flattened out, scraped, boiled, and bleached before she could use them.



Ramon watched her slow, patient work from day to day and took pains to tell her how fast his chicks were growing. "Lots faster than your old basket," he said. "One of the roosters is beginning to get tail-feathers."

"My basket will be in use long after

your rooster is dead," Rita answered fiercely.

At last she began her weaving. Round and round the framework her patient fingers plaited the tiny thread-like strips and slowly the basket grew.

She was busily at work upon it one Friday morning, before school, when Felix came in from an early visit to the rice-field and said to his wife: "The rice is growing well, and I can now spare a little time from the farm work, so I'm going out with the raft after some fish. A boat named the Rosita comes up along this coast every Saturday now, to buy oysters, shrimps, and fish for the Manila market, and I can sell my catch right here instead of carrying it to the village."

"I hope you'll have good luck," sighed Petra, "for we need the money so badly. The children's shoes are all worn out."

"I know it," said Felix, "but I could not leave the field work before. I shall get the raft ready to-day, and to-night we

will go out on the river after crabs and fish."

"May we go, too? may we go, too?" begged the Twins.

Their mother laughed. "You look just like Dingo when he wants you to throw sticks in the water for him," she cried. "He pricks up his ears, and watches you with his eyes shining and his mouth open, just the way you are watching Father now."

"Yes, you may go with us!" smiled Felix.

"And stay out all night?" they cried.

Their father nodded. "Don't be late home from school," he said.

He need n't have said it. Nothing would have induced the children to loiter that night.

When they came tearing into the yard after school, they found Felix busy getting the raft ready.

At the front end of it there were two long bamboo poles which stood upright, and from these he was hanging a large

fish-net, which could be let down and pulled up again by means of a pulley.

"Go to the house," said Felix, "and help your mother bring down the things we are to take with us."

Petra was just packing food into a basket. When the children came running in, she had a worried look and was counting on her fingers. "There's the stove, that's one," she said, touching with her foot a small box filled with earth. "A little rice, that's two. The frying-pan is three, the wood is four, the salt is five, and the fat to cook the fish in is six. Dear me! There were surely more things than that, but I can't think what they were!"

"Father's waiting," called Rita.

"I know, I know," said her mother. "I'm coming," and, hastily picking up the basket, she started for the raft.

Rita carried the frying-pan, and Ramon the stove, and in a few moments they were all at the water's edge. Dingo was there before them, running distractedly along

the bank and barking joyfully. He never doubted for a moment that they wanted him to go, too.

Petra sighed. "Dingo on the raft would be a perfect nuisance," she said, but Dingo was already on the raft.

Ramon, obeying his mother's command, tried to put him off, but he sat down and refused to budge, and when Ramon tried to pull him off, he just slid along sitting down.

"It's no use," said Felix. "We're losing time. Let him stay. Load on the rest of the stuff, and I'll push off."

Petra and the children flew like good sailors to obey the captain's orders. They stowed the stove, the basket, the wood, and themselves on board, and Felix was just pushing off with his long pole, when Petra clapped her hand to her head and shrieked: "Wait a minute! Where are the matches?" She searched frantically through the basket.

"Santa Maria! they were left behind," she cried.

The raft was already a short distance from shore, but Ramon took a running jump, and as he was bare-footed, it did n't matter so very much that he landed in the mud about a foot from shore. He raced up to the house, burst into the kitchen, seized the matches, and leaped down the steps and over the chicken-coop, which stood by the door.

The little brown hen was in the coop, clucking away as if she had clock-works inside of her. She had clucked every minute she was awake through all the five weeks since her brood had hatched. She had clucked herself thin, but she had taken good care of her chicks. They were all fat and running about after bugs as Ramon dashed by. "There," he thought to himself, "I ought to feed the little hen and put her coop under the house in case of rain, but I can't stop now. It won't hurt her to go hungry for once, anyway."

He sped past her and, jumping aboard the raft, tossed the match-box to his mother.

"I thought all the time there was something missing," said Petra. "But I could n't think what it was. I said the list over and over to myself, just like my rosary. It's lucky I thought of it at last, for whatever should we do without matches?"

Felix said, "Humph!" That was all he said about the matches. Then he pushed the raft out into the stream, and the fishing expedition was begun.

When they were well out in the stream, Felix let down the net. He let it down and drew it up again three times without finding a single fish in it. Each time it came up empty, he poled the raft to another spot and tried again. Petra sat beside the fish-baskets, waiting to help empty the net and sort the fish, and Ramon and Rita lay on their stomachs, peering down into the dark water over the edge of the raft. They saw clouds reflected in the smooth surface and their own faces looking back at them, but no fish.

It grew later and later, and still they had

not caught even one fish to cook for their supper. Felix was disgusted, Ramon and Rita were tired of keeping still, Dingo's ears drooped and even Petra looked downcast. Then the sun dropped out of sight behind the hills of Bataan across the bay and the sudden tropic night was upon them.

As it grew dark, Petra rose from her seat by the empty baskets and went to the back of the raft and, placing the stones upon the little stove, began to lay a fire.

"We shall just have to make our supper of the rice," she said. "But there is only a little of it. I thought surely there would be a fish to cook. It's a lucky thing I thought of the matches in time," she went on, as she struck a light and set fire to the fuel.

"I put them in a tin box on purpose so they could n't get wet." She handed the box to her husband. "You had better light the torches before it gets quite dark," she said.

Felix had brought five bamboo flares. One he fastened to the bamboo net pole and the other four he placed on the four corners



of the raft. Petra's fire was soon crackling merrily, and long streamers of light from the flares and the fire danced over the rippling waters. Other lights shone out from distant fishing boats and were mirrored in the bay. Overhead the sky was dark.

"It looks as if the stars had all fallen out of the sky and were floating about on the sea, does n't it?" said Rita, looking up into the darkness overhead and then at the glittering lights below.

Just then Felix drew up the net again, and there, to their great joy, were ten crabs! He dumped them into one of the fish-baskets, where they crawled and sprawled on each other like huge spiders, and again let down the net. This time there were still more crabs. "They are like moths about a candle," said Felix. "They follow the lights."

With every dip of the great net, he now brought up either crabs or fish. He put the fish in one basket and the crabs in another, and let down the net again as soon as he could. Dingo sat beside the baskets and watched the crabs, yelping and backing off now and then when one of the fierce-looking creatures moved a threatening claw in his direction.

"If this luck keeps up, we shall have

a fine catch for the Rosita in the morning," said Felix joyfully as he emptied another netful on the squirming mass.

It was very unlucky for Dingo that he was so near the basket just at that moment, for one of the crabs spilled over the edge of it and lit on his tail, and the next instant he was racing like a mad dog round and round the raft with the crab bouncing and rattling after him. The harder Dingo ran to get away from it, the harder it thumped and bumped after him for the dreadful thing had shut its claws firmly on Dingo's tail and had no notion of letting go. He ran round the fish-baskets, leaped over the stove, upset the frying-pan, and finally whirled round and round trying to catch his tail. He barked at it indignantly and slapped at it with his paw, but every time the tail whisked past just out of reach. The whole family roared with laughter until Ramon caught the tail and held it while Felix removed the crab.

Dingo's feelings were, so hurt he went

to the farthest corner of the raft and sat down by himself.

When quiet was restored again, Petra quickly cleaned a fine, large pompano fish, and soon the sputter of frying fat gave promise of supper. Felix could not bear to leave his fishing, even to eat, so he snatched a mouthful now and then as he could between letting the net down and hauling it up again.

The Twins sat near the stove with their mother, stuffing themselves with rice and fried fish while Dingo, his injuries forgotten, lay flat on his stomach gnawing at the fish's head in great content. They were all so absorbed in what they were doing that no one realized that the raft, borne quietly along by the river current, had slipped out into the bay and that the ebbing tide was carrying it farther and farther with every receding wave.

V
THE TYPHOON



V

THE TYPHOON

THE raft was now just a little island of dim light in the midst of the soft velvety darkness of the night. As they looked out over the bay their eyes were blinded by the flares and they could see little but the lights of other fishing craft and their sparkling reflections in the dark water. There was no moon, and the clouds hid the stars.

At last Felix shaded his eyes with his hand and, peering out into the darkness, tried to get his bearings.

"I can't tell just where we are," he said. "But the fish are still coming in well. They follow the lights."

He had scarcely finished speaking, when a sudden gust of wind slapped the pulley-lines and swung the net out of reach of his hand. When it swung back again, he

dropped it into the water, and then moistened a finger and held it up to feel the direction of the wind. The gust of wind had passed as quickly as it had come, and there was now a light, shifty breeze, blowing from the northwest. Before it was time to pull up his net again there came still another gust and then another.

"I don't like the looks of this," said Felix. "The wind is blowing in from the China Sea."

Even the Twins knew that the terrible typhoons which sometimes sweep over the Islands were apt to come from that direction and they shivered with fear. Almost at once the sea was churned to foam, and white-tipped waves rose out of the blackness about them. The children huddled together and gazed in frightened silence at Petra as she crawled on her hands and knees and brought the baskets to the middle of the raft. They were now plunging wildly about on the tossing waves, and the flare, swinging back and forth on the bam-

boo pole, swept strange, grotesque shadows across the raft as Felix struggled in vain to bring it to shore. When she had made everything as secure as she could, Petra crept back to the children and sat between them with an arm around each. Then came a flash of lightning and a fearful crash of thunder, and Dingo crawled under the shelter with his tail curled so far under him that his hind legs curled with it.

Now the rain began, and the children and their mother followed Dingo into the tiny tent-like space. They lay on their stomachs, clinging to one another and to the supports of the nipa-thatched hut. The flash of lightning had shown Felix that his frantic efforts to bring the raft to shore were useless, for wind and waves were both against him and it was far more likely that he would be swept away into the sea, so he, too, crawled back to the shelter. There was not room for him inside. In fact, it was not even big enough for Petra and the children. They tried to push Dingo out, hop-

ing to make room for Felix, but Dingo refused to budge, and the raft was now plunging about so wildly that they dared not move.

Felix sank down at their feet, threw an arm over the six legs sticking out from under the thatch, and with his other hand clung to the frail support of the hut.

The rain came down in torrents, and the wretched family could do nothing but hold to the raft as best they could and pray with all their might. They could not even speak to one another, and, indeed, what was there to say? They knew very well that at any moment they might be swept away into the raging sea. For some time they lay quivering with terror and with cold, for they were now wet to the skin, and the wind blew on them in chilling blasts. The flares sputtered and went out, and they felt the shudder of the raft as the baskets slid about bumping into each other and into their shelter. Then the baskets tipped over, and Felix, with despair, felt his wonderful catch

of fish slide past him in a slimy stream into the sea. The crabs crawled over him and he could not move. The little stove shot by and was gone, and the next wave carried away the thatch of the hut, leaving only the upright supports to which they clung.

It seemed they could endure no more, for there is a limit even to terror, yet the next moment the raft itself seemed to sink beneath them and for an instant they were afloat upon a wave which swept every movable thing, except themselves, before it into the sea. They felt the raft rise up under them again and then once more the waters surged over them. They clung together in a desperate heap, and each time when the wave had passed, were surprised to find themselves still clinging to their frail support. They knew that bamboo would never sink but the raft might at any moment be dashed to pieces by the waves and there was no possibility of swimming in such angry waters.

For three terrible hours the storm raged.

They learned to hold their breath when a wave broke over them and breathe again when it had passed. Otherwise they might have been drowned even though they still clung to the raft.

At last the wind quieted a little, and the rain slackened, but it made little difference to them, for the waves still threw them about as if the raft were no more than a floating chip.

For three hours more they plunged and dipped and rolled with the heaving waters, and it was not until a long red streak in the eastern sky proclaimed the dawn that even Felix could lift his head enough to look about them.

The long red streak like a crack in the sky showed the rugged line of a range of hills far away on the horizon to the eastward. In the west Felix could trace the hills of Bataan showing faintly against the dark sky, and he knew that they were floating about in the middle of Manila Bay.

Felix gave Petra's ankle a pull, and a



mass of wet, soggy clothes heaved a little, and she, too, raised herself on one elbow.

"The children," gasped Felix, "they are alive?"

Petra nodded. She was almost too spent to speak.

"They clutched my hands all night," she whispered. She rose to her knees with difficulty, and bent her head close to the heads of Ramon and Rita to be sure they were really breathing.

"Let them be," she whispered. "They are either asleep or unconscious." She looked out over the wastes of water and shivered.

"If we are to drown after all, it will be as well not to rouse them," she said. She crossed herself, murmuring a prayer, and sank down again.

"Hold fast to the children and to the raft," said Felix to his wife. "It does n't pitch quite so much now, and I am going to let go of you."

Petra clutched him. "Let us all die together if need be," she moaned. "If you try to move about you will be dashed into the sea."

Felix did not answer. He was already on his hands and knees, and, in spite of her efforts to hold him back, he began to crawl toward the bamboo net poles, which were still standing. Petra shuddered and covered her eyes. She could not bear to see him swept away. Felix reached the front of the raft and, seizing the bamboo poles with

both hands, managed to pull himself to his feet. He hoped that possibly some boat might see their plight and rescue them, but there was no boat in sight. He looked about on the raft. There was not a thing left upon it but themselves and Dingo. Fish-baskets, nets, even his long pole — all were gone. For a moment he was in despair. Then he stripped off his white shirt and managed to tie it to the rope and pull it up by means of a pulley.

If some fishing-boat which had weathered the storm would but see his signal of distress, they might yet be saved. He sat down by the poles to watch. The gray dawn grew to full morning light, and the sun beat down upon the wretched group on the raft. They suffered with heat and thirst, but though the water was now more quiet, there was no sign of help anywhere on the horizon. Too spent to move, Petra and the children lay still and waited for death. Dingo roused himself and crawled feebly to Felix and lay down beside him.

On the pole the white signal hung limp in the sultry air. One hour passed, two, three; still Felix sat grimly watching, watching, and saw no sign. Petra and the children still lay in a stupor.

In the east, far away across the waste of waters, he now saw a cloud of smoke. "That must be Manila," he said to himself.

Again he searched the whole horizon, and this time—oh, joy!—in the west, like an echo from the clouds above the city, a thin wisp of smoke rose against the sky. He gave a great shout, and Petra roused herself.

"Look, look," cried Felix, pointing to the wisp of smoke. "It's a steamer going from Bataan to Manila. There are steamers that cross the bay every day loaded with fish. We are right in its course. If only we can make them see us!"

He pulled the rope frantically up and down, and his shirt flapped up and down with it. Hope put new life into Petra. She

roused the children. Dingo sat up, too, and barked.

The water was now quiet enough so they ventured to crawl about a little, and they sat up in the middle of the raft, clinging together.

"They are too far away to see us yet, but I'll keep moving the shirt up and down, anyway," cried Felix. "Sit up as tall as you can, so it will be easier for them to see us."

The steamer came nearer. They could see its black hull grow larger and larger as it approached. It seemed to them that they watched it for hours, and still there was no sign that they were seen. The suspense grew unbearable.

"If they don't see us they may run over us," cried Felix. "We are right in their path."

"They must see us," moaned Petra, and she and the children waved their arms frantically, while Felix flew his white signal and Dingo barked.

On and on came the boat. Then, suddenly, there was a fearful blast from the whistle, the beating of the engine slowed down and a row of heads appeared above the deck-rail. In a few moments the steamer was close alongside, a rope with a great loop in the end was thrown over, and one by one the shipwrecked family were lifted on board. Dingo was a great problem, and for a time it looked as if he would have to be left to his fate, but at last a basket was let down, Felix fastened him into it with the pulley-lines, and, whimpering with fright, he also was drawn on board.

Felix was the last to leave the wreck, and when he, too, stood on the deck with his family safe about him, his heart was so filled with thankfulness that there was no room in it for grief over the loss of his raft. They watched it tossing about on the waves, as the engines started up and the steamer went on its way to Manila and the terrible night was left behind them like a bad dream. The Captain was a little man with a yellow

skin, thick black hair, and a wide mouth which cracked wider still in a friendly grin as he looked at the forlorn group.

"Well," he said, "I've often fished in Manila Bay, but never have had such a haul as this in my life. What in the world did you think you were doing so far out on that raft?"

Felix told him their story. "Hum," said the Captain. "It's lucky that this boat is loaded with fruit and vegetables." He turned to one of the deck hands.

"Go bring them anything that can be eaten raw," he said, "and be quick about it."

"And oh, please, some water," said Petra.

The man disappeared and in a few moments returned with a basket of mangoes, pineapples, and bananas, which he placed before them on the deck. He also brought water in a large gourd. When they had eaten and drunk, and their clothes were dried in the sun, they began to feel much more cheerful. They were alive, well, and

together. That was much to be thankful for, but their plight was still serious. They were a long way from home, without money or means of getting any. How in the world were they to get back to the little farm-house by the river, and what would they find when they got there? The typhoon which wrecked their raft must have done damage on shore as well. Felix thought about his rice-field, about the animals which had not been fed, and hoped the wind had not blown the house away, as well as the raft. Petra sat with her head in her hands and thought about these things, too.



VI
AFTER THE STORM



VI

AFTER THE STORM

THE steamer steadily plowed its course through the choppy sea, and in an hour more was threading its way through the crowded shipping of the harbor of Manila. When at last after steaming slowly up the Pasig River it had reached the dock, Felix thanked the Captain for his kindness and led his family and Dingo down the gang-plank and on to the pier. It was a busy place. Men were unloading fish and vegetables from other boats as well as from the one which had rescued them. Other men were piling the produce on carts drawn by carabaos and hurrying away to the markets. Scores of boats were tied along the banks, and in and out and up and down the waterway busy tugs plied back and forth, filling

the air with the screams of their whistles and with smoke from their stacks.

The children had never been in any place larger than their own little village before, and they gazed in bewilderment at all the new and wonderful scenes of a big city. There were ocean steamers from all parts of the world which had brought cargoes of iron, steel, and machinery to the islands. There were great warehouses where all these things and many more were stored until they could be sent to other destinations. There were also ships just sailing away loaded with sugar, tobacco, lumber, hemp, and coconuts. It was so interesting and new to Petra and the children that for a time they almost forgot their desperate situation in watching the strange new life about them.

Felix, however, did not forget, even for a moment. They must find a way to get home, and they must eat. He had been to Manila before and knew his way about.

"Come with me," he said to Petra and

the children. "We are in every one's way here." He led them away from the waterfront to a grass-covered plaza with fine buildings fronting upon it and driveways swarming with carriages and automobiles, and stopped in front of a high stone monument.

"Stay here," he said, "until I come for you." Then he disappeared in the direction of the wharves.

Glad to rest, Petra and the children sat down upon the grass and gazed about them. For a long time they waited, and at last, just as they were beginning to grow uneasy, Felix appeared with a bag of food in his hands and a cheerful smile on his face.

"Where did you get it, my angel," cried Petra, seizing the bag.

"I worked on the docks helping to unload a cargo and earned enough to buy a little food," Felix answered; "and I have more news. The Rosita is just about to leave the harbor and go northward. I have no fish for her to take to market as I thought

I should have, but the Captain says that if I help load his boat with produce at the landing-places, we may sail with him."

At first Petra shuddered at the thought of going out again upon the treacherous waters, but Felix said: "Come, they are waiting for us; there is no other way." So she and the children rose at once and followed him, as he plunged again into the noise and confusion of the busy harbor. It was not until they were on board the *Rosita* and were slowly making their way down the Pasig through the crowded shipping to the open waters of the bay that they had a chance to eat the food that Felix had brought.

The direction of the wind had changed after the storm, and though the water was still rough, the boat traffic of the bay was already going on as usual. Even Petra forgot her fears, as the light breeze filled the sails of the *Rosita* and they skimmed away over the blue waters in the direction of their home. There was nothing she could do; so,

while Felix sorted fish into baskets, she and her children found a spot as far out of the way as they could in one corner of the deck and went sound asleep. The boat stopped at several little towns along the shore to take on loads of dried coconut meat, vegetables, and fish, but the weary travelers slept on, with Dingo beside them sleeping too.

They were aroused at last by Felix. "Wake up, wake up," he shouted in their ears. "We are almost home."

Joyfully they sprang to their feet, rubbing the sleep from their eyes, and, making their way around fish-baskets and over coils of rope, leaned over the deck-rail in a row.

"See," cried Felix, pointing toward the shore, "don't you see the river, and the coconut tree where we tied the raft? And look, the roof! The roof shows among the trees!"

"Thanks be to God, it is still on the house," Petra exclaimed, fervently crossing herself. "I thought it might be blown away."

Soon a small boat was lowered from the

Rosita, and the shipwrecked mariners were let down into it one by one. Felix was the first to go. Dingo was the second, for when he saw Felix in the small boat, he gave a yelp, leaped over the rail, and landed with a thump which nearly overturned it. In a few moments Petra and the children had also made a safe descent and were waving farewells as the little boat turned its prow toward the shore.

"One of the biggest banana trees is down," cried Ramon, pointing to a fallen heap of green near the kitchen as they drew near land.

"So is the bamboo clump," said Felix. "There is hardly one stem left standing."

"Anyway the house is still there," said Petra.

"And there is the goat, looking out of the kitchen door!" screamed Rita.

"Santa Maria! How did she get there?" groaned Petra. "Ramon, you must have left the door open, when you went for the matches."

"I never did," said Ramon stoutly. "I remember shutting it. At least I almost remember shutting it."

They were so happy to get home that Felix even joked a little. "I don't see old Bobtail anywhere. Maybe he is in the kitchen, too," he said. Petra smiled at this, and the children shouted with laughter at the idea of old Bobtail climbing the kitchen steps.

The moment the keel of the boat ground into the soft mud of the river-bank, Petra and the children sprang ashore, and, leaving Felix to say good-bye to the boatman, ran for the house.

Dingo tore up the slope ahead of them as if he had been shot out of a gun, for he too saw the goat and meant to teach her a lesson as soon as possible.

When the family reached the door, they did n't dare to go in, for Dingo had scrambled up the steps and was having it out with the goat. He barked at her and tore frantically about the kitchen, nipping at her

legs, while the goat backed round, butting at him whenever she got a chance.

"There go the water-tubes," groaned Petra, as a crash and a splash warned them of fresh disaster. The water must have doused Dingo, for the next moment he came yelping down the steps, dripping wet. By the time Felix reached the house, the war was over. Dingo was out of sight, the goat and her kid were on their way to the pasture down by the river, and Rita and her mother were cleaning up the kitchen.

When the goat was taken care of, Ramon began to search for his hen and her brood. There was no sign of her in her place by the kitchen door. Even the coop was gone. Feeling very guilty for his neglect of her, he ran along the river-bank, hoping every moment to hear her cluck. Then he heard Dingo barking as if he had found one of the big lizards he was always hunting for, and, dashing across the pasture, found him up to his knees in a pool of water. On the bank stepping anxiously about and cluck-



ing as industriously as ever, was the little brown hen, followed by just one of her brood, the young rooster of whose tail-feathers Ramon was so proud. Near the pool lay the coop, and floating upon its surface were two dead chickens. There were no others of the brood to be seen. Ramon mournfully picked up the coop, which, in spite of having been blown so far by the

wind, was still whole, and started for the house, driving the hen and her one chick before him.

"If I had only just put her under the house, this would never have happened," he mourned. "Now the whole brood is blown away, all but that one little rooster, and there is no chance at all of my taking a prize at the festival. Oh, dear! I wish there were no such things as typhoons in the whole world."

When he came into the house, he found his father studying a hole in the roof where the thatch had been torn away. Rita was examining the chest to see if her precious basket had been injured by the storm, and Petra was trying to get something for the family to eat. It was a sad group, even though a thankful one, that knelt that night before the household shrine, for even the children knew that with the loss of the raft they were poorer than they had ever been before in their lives.

In the night Ramon was awakened by

the murmur of voices. His father and mother were talking together in low tones.

"It is a hard blow to us," he heard Felix say. "I cannot fish without a raft and baskets and nets, and without fish to sell I don't know how it will be possible for us to pull through until harvest. The field was swept by the storm, too. It may come up again, but at best the crop is not likely to be as good as I hoped."

For a moment there was silence. Petra could not seem to find anything hopeful to say. When she spoke, there was the sound of tears in her voice.

"At least we are all alive," she said. "When we were on the raft in the storm, I thought nothing would ever again seem hard if only we were alive and together, —but" (and this was the place where her voice choked) "maybe we have been saved from drowning only to be starved at last."

"It is not so bad as that," said Felix comfortingly, "but we may have to sell

old Bobtail; he's about the only valuable thing we have left that we could sell."

"Oh! we cannot sell old Bobtail," sobbed Petra. "Then we could not plow or carry our rice to market, or the fish, if we should ever be able to fish again."

"Yes," admitted Felix. "It would set us back years to part with old Bobtail. Without Bobtail we cannot raise rice, and without rice, we cannot keep Bobtail. We are in a fix either way."

"Could n't you make another raft?" asked Petra.

"Yes," answered Felix, "I mean to do that. I can use the bamboos that were blown down, but without nets and baskets, and such things, the raft is n't of any use."

Again there was silence, and Ramon lay perfectly still listening with all his ears. He caught the sound of a little sob.

Then Felix said: "Crying won't do any good, Petra. We shall get along somehow. We can get fish enough for ourselves, and there are vegetables growing in the garden.

We shall not starve even if we have no money and no way of getting any."

"There's the goat," said Petra. "We shall have milk."

"Yes," said Felix. "And there are the chickens and the pigs."

His voice already sounded a little more cheerful. "If only we could get new nets and pulleys," he exclaimed, "but I cannot make a living without fishing, and I cannot fish without these things, and there is no money, and no prospect of any to buy them with. I had counted on the fishing for most of our living until harvest, and now if we have a poor crop again—" he broke off with a sigh.

Then Petra said soothingly: "It's night now. Things always seem much worse in the dark. When morning comes, we shall think of something. Now go to sleep."

Ramon knew his father and mother had not meant that he should hear what they said, because they did not wish to make their children unhappy. He could not bear

to have his mother cry. So, for a long time he lay wide awake on his mat, thinking over ways of helping them. He thought first of discovering a gold-mine in the pasture.

“I’m almost sure there must be gold there,” he thought to himself. “If I could find where it is, I would dig it up and bring it home and give every bit of it to mother. Then she could buy the nets for father and some fine clothes for herself. Maybe we could buy a big boat like the Rosita. I could be the Captain.” And then, just as he saw himself heroically saving his family from all their troubles, he fell asleep.

VII

THE ROOSTER AT THE
HARVEST FESTIVAL



VII

THE ROOSTER AT THE HARVEST FESTIVAL

THE next morning the whole family slept late. When the children woke, their father and mother had already eaten their breakfast and Felix had gone to get more nipa palms to mend the hole in the roof. Ramon looked anxiously at his mother as she stepped quietly about the little house, to see if she were still crying, but her face looked calm as usual and he almost felt as if the talk of the night must have been a dream.

He and Rita ate their breakfast hurriedly and ran off to school. When they reached it, the morning session had already begun, and they waited a moment, dreading to go in because they were late. At last they timidly opened the door a crack and peeped inside.

Then a surprising thing happened. When she caught sight of them, the teacher herself came forward and hugged them before the whole school, and the children all clapped their hands! Every one in the village knew, by this time, that the Santos family had gone out on the raft and had not been seen since the storm. So when Ramon and Rita walked into the school-room, it was no wonder that every one was glad to see them. There was so much excitement over their safe return that the maestra actually gave up a class and asked Ramon and Rita to tell the story of their adventures.

It was very pleasant being heroes and having so much to tell. It was almost worth all the terrors of that awful night, and Ramon made the most of it. He told about the wind and the waves, and the steamer that picked them up, and about all the wonderful things they had seen at the dock in Manila, and the children listened with their eyes wide and their mouths open.

For two days they were treated as beings apart. The other children vied with one another in attentions, and were proud to be allowed even to walk beside the heroes of such a marvelous experience. Then the excitement died down, and in a week they were no more and no less than they had always been.

Preparations for the coming harvest festival next took the attention of the school, and the talk of the children was all about the prizes to be given for home work at the celebration in the village. Ramon was encouraged to find that only one other child beside himself, a boy named José, had tried to raise chickens, and because of this fact he still hoped against hope that his rooster might take a prize. Out of school hours he watched his young cockerel faithfully, fed it all it would hold, listened with pride to its ridiculous crowing, and tried to make Rita believe that it was the finest young rooster in the whole world.

Rita, meanwhile, wove away at the bas-

ket, spending almost every moment of daylight that she could get out of school in working out the intricate pattern.

Though their father and mother said little about their anxieties, the children could not help knowing that things were growing steadily worse and worse for them. There was now very little to eat except camotes, and the fruit which grew so plentifully about them. The rice was entirely gone, the pigs had all been sold, many of the chickens and ducks had been eaten, and the future looked dark indeed. There was now nothing left that he could sell except the carabao, and Felix had made up his mind that he would go hungry himself before he would part with old Bobtail. Even if he had wished to sell him, there was no one to buy, for his neighbors were as poor as himself.

Hoping against hope, he worked away on his raft, even though there was no money to buy twine for the nets, or ropes and pulleys for it. He eked out their scanty meals



by catching crabs, with his hands, or by diving to the river-bottom for oysters.

Ramon had long since told Rita about the talk he had overheard in the night, and they, together, had tried to think of some way to help. He told her about the gold-mine he meant to find. Rita sniffed at that plan, but she had nothing better to offer, so one day Ramon went without her to the pasture to hunt for it. Dingo went with

him, but he found a nest of turtle eggs instead, and there was no more gold-hunting that day. It was a proud boy and a proud dog that returned to the little farm-house that night, and Ramon decided that perhaps he could support the family better by hunting turtle eggs than by digging for gold.

That night, at least, they all had a good meal.

In this way, the weeks dragged themselves slowly by, and as the time for harvesting the rice drew near, Felix watched the weather with deepening concern. Another typhoon, or even a violent storm, and their whole living might be swept away. Now that he could no longer fish, the rice crop was his only hope. If anything were to happen to that, he would be ruined indeed.

At last, one night, he said to Petra: "To-morrow I am going to cut the rice. I want to get it in early, for boats from Manila are already appearing along the coast to gather up new grain for the market. The

earlier I can get in my crop, the better the price is likely to be ; so let us go to bed with the chickens and get up with the dawn."

Long before daylight, the family was wakened by the crowing of Ramon's rooster under the house. It was still so early that the first streak of dawn had not yet reddened the eastern sky. In a very short time, they were all up and out in the rice-field, looking like four dark ghosts as they stooped to cut the stalks of grain. When they had gathered an armful, they bound them together with a wisp of straw and laid the sheaves in a heap on the dyke. Felix was already beginning to collect their sheaves into great baskets, when other reapers, big and little, came into the adjoining fields and began their work. All day long the sound of laughter and singing floated on the summer air, for the yield was better than they had feared and every hour lessened the danger of loss. Even Felix sang a little as his hope grew stronger, and

the children, seeing him cheerful, nearly split their throats.

Old Bobtail had been hitched to a farm cart and stood patiently at the edge of the field waiting to take the bundles of grain back to the house, and Ramon, feeling very important, rode on his back and guided him back and forth. While he and Felix brought in the grain, Rita and her mother got it ready for threshing. The rice sheaves were laid in a heap on the hard earth near the door, and when Felix and Ramon brought in the last load, the whole family jumped on it, and stamped and pranced on the pile in order to beat the grain from the straw. For some time this strange dance went on, and then Felix went away to feed the pigs, and Petra took some of the palay¹ under the house to pound off the hulls, so she could cook some of the new rice for their supper.

She was busily thumping away with the pestle on the grain in her mortar, when

¹ Unthreshed rice-heads.



Ramon, growing tired of his task, was struck with a bright idea. Leaving Rita still stalking solemnly over the rice-pile, he ran to the pasture, and a moment later reappeared with the goat and her little kid. He had a rope around the goat's horns, and when he had succeeded in dragging her to the rice-heap, he made her trot back and forth, back and forth, on it. Dingo, seeing this new game, was seized with a sudden desire to help in it, so he dashed after the goat, barking and nipping at her heels, just

as he had done when he had found her in the kitchen.

Then it was that the goat did some wonderful work as a threshing-machine! Round and round the straw-pile she galloped, with Dingo yelping after her, while Ramon stood in the middle, holding the rope like a horse-trainer in the ring at a circus and shouting at the top of his lungs. At first Petra did not notice the uproar, because she was making such a noise herself pounding the rice, but after a while she stopped to take a breath, and when she heard that fearful chorus, she didn't wait to find out what was the matter, she just screamed: "What on earth are you doing with that goat? Stop it, whatever it is."

While she was saying this, she was on her way to the window as fast as she could go. When she got there, she put her head out and wrung her hands in dismay at the lively scene before her.

Ramon had not heard a word his mother had said, because he and Rita and the goat



and Dingo and the kid were making such a bedlam of shouts and bleats and yelps that he could not have heard, even if he had had ears a foot long. He saw her, however, and, thinking she would be pleased at his cleverness, he began to show off a little. He seized the goat by the tail and went careering about on the rice like a typhoon on Manila Bay!

“Stop, stop!” screamed Petra. “Are you crazy? That goat won’t give a drop of milk if you use her like that!”

This time Ramon heard: "We are just threshing out the rice," he shouted back, "and Dingo is helping—"

"I'll warrant Dingo is helping," said Petra, under her breath. "He's the most helpful dog I ever knew."

By the time she had said this she was halfway down the steps, but before she was clear down and on her way to the rice-pile, Ramon somehow suspected she did not approve his methods, so he started for the pasture on the run, dragging the goat after him as fast as she could go. There were times when Ramon could read his mother's thoughts, and at such times he hastened to obey. He thought best to stay in the pasture for a while after that, and did not appear again until the rice was cooked and Rita came out to call him in to supper.

The threshing and winnowing of the pile of rice took two days more, but at last it lay piled in a brown heap on a mat before the door, and Felix sat down on his heels and looked at it in silence for some time.

At last he said: "There is enough for ourselves and a little over. If I sell it all, I can buy the twine and pulleys and ropes that we need, but in that case we shall have to go on short rations all the year. The crop is better than I feared it might be, and if it had n't been for the typhoon would have been very good indeed. As it is, we must choose. Shall we sell the rice and equip the raft, or keep the rice and give up the fishing?"

"Can't we keep some of it and have the nets and things too?" asked Ramon. He saw his dream of having all the rice he wanted fading away.

Then Petra spoke. "I'd rather pinch along for a few months more," she said, "and have the raft finished. Then we shall have two ways of earning a living. If we should depend on the crop alone and it should fail, we should be worse off than ever. Then we should have neither rice nor fish."

Ramon groaned. "Can't we have all we want just for once?" he begged.

His mother smiled at him. "Yes," she said. "We'll have a feast to celebrate the harvest and send the rest to the market." Her voice was cheerful, though no one knew so well as she how hard it would be to find enough to feed her family with their chief dependence gone.

While Felix and the children stored the rice in sacks, she went into the house, taking with her a large portion to cook for their supper.

The harvest festival was now at hand and the day before the great event was spent in getting ready for it. Petra washed and ironed their clothes so they might appear spotlessly clean even though their garments were worn and old. She also mended the children's shoes, but she could not make them look well however much she tried, so she said to them, "You must have such good manners that no one will notice your shoes." The Twins wondered if any one ever had manners good enough for that.

While their mother washed and mended, the children were busy, too. Rita wrapped her precious basket in a piece of white cloth to protect it, and Ramon made a bamboo cage to carry his rooster in. When it was done, he had the still harder task of catching the rooster and getting him into it. The rooster was now a very handsome young bird. His feathers were a glossy, golden brown, his legs were a healthy yellow, and his red comb stood up bright on his proud head.

Ramon waited until he had gone to roost for the night, and then crept up behind him and seized him by the legs. There was a terrible squawking, and when the astonished fowl found himself shut in the cage, he was so humiliated that he became sullen. His tail-feathers drooped, and he refused even to eat. Ramon put him under the house, where he crowed indignantly at intervals throughout the night.

At last the great day dawned. Ramon hurried early to the pasture and, mounting



old Bobtail, drove him to the house. There he was hitched to the cart, which had been loaded with the sacks of grain the night before. An empty bag for a saddle was placed on his back, and when the family was ready to start, Ramon climbed up and seated himself upon it.

Rita and her mother sat on the bags of rice, Rita holding her precious basket and Petra carrying her embroidered linen which she hoped to sell. Felix handed the bamboo cage up to Ramon, who was unwilling that any one but himself should take charge of his prize rooster, and off they started,

with Felix leading Bobtail by the rope in his nose. Dingo brought up the rear of the procession, his tail wagging briskly with excitement.

The road to the village lay along the shore of the bay, and as the cart creaked slowly past the farms of their neighbors, other carts, loaded in much the same way, joined the caravan, and the whole procession moved slowly toward the town.

The streets of the village itself were filled with throngs of white-clad men and gayly dressed women and girls, for the harvest festival was the great event of the year and the farmers from all the region about had flocked to attend the celebration and sell their produce. A group of grain-dealers had come down from Manila to buy rice from the towns along the coast, and the steamer which had brought them was at the dock, waiting to receive its cargo, when the Santos family arrived at the village.

The wives of some of the dealers, and a few American tourists who had come with

them, were wandering about the streets, mingling with the crowds, eagerly interested in seeing what the harvest festival in a country town was like.

When Felix saw the strangers, he said to his wife: "There is a steamer at the dock, as sure as anything, and I am going to get there as fast as I can. You and the children wait for me at the schoolhouse."

Petra and the children instantly dismounted, carrying their bundles, and soon the cart was out of sight.

Crowds of children, dressed in white and carrying baskets filled with offerings for the exhibition, were already swarming into the schoolhouse when Petra and the Twins arrived. The flushed and distracted maestra was receiving them and placing the contents of their baskets on benches and desks about the room, labeling each article with the name of the child whose work it was. Proud mothers followed in her wake, watching to see that their articles were placed so that they would show well, ex-



amining the things made by other children, and comparing notes with other mothers.

Petra trailed after the Twins, and Dingo, taking it for granted that dogs were invited too, kept close at their heels. Ramon went ahead, carrying the bamboo cage and look-

ing eagerly about to see if there were any other fowls on exhibition.

"Here," said the teacher, holding out her hand, "give me your cock. I will put it beside José's. You and he are the only ones who have sent chickens." She lifted the cage over the heads of the children who were crowding about the long bench filled with vegetables and plumped it down by José's rooster, which was in an open box and was tied only by one leg.

Ramon's rooster had borne a great deal. He had been caught by the legs and crammed into a box too small for him. His protests had brought him no relief and he was now thoroughly enraged. His eyes had red rings around them and his tail-feathers no longer drooped. When the teacher set him down beside the other cage, he felt that his hour had struck. Neither was José's rooster in a mood for trifling. He too had been hardly dealt with, and the two instantly glared at each other with their heads down and their feathers standing in a stiff ruff about their

necks. For a moment they eyed each other, and then, before any one could stop them, each flew at the other so fiercely that José's rooster broke his string and Ramon's burst off two of the bamboo slats of his cage and the two fought with beak and claw!

In vain the teacher wrung her hands. She did not dare to separate them for fear of their beaks and spurs. The crowd fell back a little, but the room was full, and the roosters, for lack of space, flew up in the air. José's, seeing a chance to escape, dashed for the open door. Ramon's bird tore after him, and the two lighted on the astonished heads of the children, flapping from one to another as if they were mere stones in their pathway.

They had almost reached the door, over the laughing, screaming crowd, when Dingo saw his duty. He dashed after them, and the next instant birds and dog were tearing like a cyclone up the street, José's rooster in the lead with Ramon's in hot pursuit, and Dingo flying after the two so fast his feet scarcely touched the ground.

Everybody in the village — men, women, and children, tourists and all — raced after them, and never was there such a sight since the Pied Piper piped all the children out of Hamelin town. Ramon and José, neck and neck, were only a little way behind Dingo. They were in despair over the loss of their part in the exhibit and determined, if possible, to catch their pets and take them back to the schoolhouse. José's rooster was equally determined to get back to his own roost, and, running and flying by turns and squawking all the way, he got over the ground with amazing speed.

The two boys were soon left behind, and when, a few moments later, they reached José's house, they found the cocks finishing their argument on the roof of the chicken-house, with Dingo dancing helplessly about on the ground. The boys were almost as helpless as the dog. In vain they tried to throw water on the crazy creatures. The roosters kept out of reach, and it was not until José's bird flew off the roof on the far-



ther side and hid in the bushes, and Ramon's
sank exhausted after one triumphant crow,
that Ramon was able to climb up and catch
him. Very sadly he took his pet in his arms

and, followed by the crowd, returned to the schoolhouse. There he found his broken cage, put the disgraced fowl into it, and tied it up so he should not get out.

There was no chance of any prize for him now, nor for José either, and if it had not been for the teacher there might have been a dispute between the two boys. Each blamed the other for the disaster, but the teacher said soothingly: "If any one is to blame, it is I. I should not have put them beside each other. Next year you had better raise corn or cucumbers, for I will never let another rooster be shown in my schoolhouse!"



VIII
THE PRIZE



VIII

THE PRIZE

THREE o'clock in the afternoon was the time set for the prizes to be given out at the exhibition, and all the rest of the morning was spent by the teacher and the town president and other important persons of the village in examining the things sent in by the children and deciding which ones were the best. No one else was allowed in the schoolhouse while this important matter was being settled, so the crowds drifted away for their siestas, and quiet settled upon the village.

Petra and the children took their rest in a coconut grove near the schoolhouse and there ate the lunch they had brought with them. Two o'clock came, and still Felix did not appear. At three o'clock, when the

schoolhouse was again opened, Ramon left his rooster hidden in the coconut grove with Dingo to guard it, and with his mother and sister joined the crowd before the door. Just as they were going in, they saw Felix drive up with old Bobtail and the empty cart. Petra looked anxiously at Felix as he joined them.

“Did you sell it all?” she whispered.

Felix nodded. “Can’t tell you about it now,” he answered, and, following the crowd, they entered the exhibition room.

The room was so changed the children scarcely knew it. The walls were covered with palm leaves, and great bunches of flowers filled the corners with color. On each child’s desk his own work was displayed. There were great piles of fresh vegetables raised in the home gardens; there were folds of sinamay cloth woven on hand looms. There was embroidery wrought by the girls, and carved coconut bowls made by the boys. There were baskets of bamboo and mats woven from the leaves of the nipa palms.

It was a wonderful exhibition. The teacher beamed with pride, and all the fathers and mothers went about from desk to desk admiring the work of the children. Rita's basket stood in solitary splendor on her desk, but on Ramon's desk there was nothing. His desk and José's were the only empty ones in the whole room.

It was too much for Ramon. He slipped quietly under the elbows of the crowd and went out into the coconut grove, and, if he shed a few tears there, no one knew it but Dingo, and Dingo never told. It was not long, however, before his curiosity got the better of his grief and he went back and squeezed himself into the crowded room again. He peeped through a crack between two men who were standing in front of him and saw the president mount the platform to give out the prizes. He was holding Rita's basket in his hand, and these are the very words Ramon heard him say:—

“The first prize is awarded to Rita Santos for this beautiful basket. There are other

fine baskets here, made by other children, but Rita is the only one who cut and prepared the material by herself. She also designed the shape and the pattern."

Then there was a great clapping of hands. The crowd parted and he saw Rita go forward and receive from the hands of the president himself her own basket with a crisp bank note in it. He saw his father and mother beaming with pride in their daughter. Then he saw his mother search the whole room with her eyes to find him and see if he, too, was sharing in Rita's triumph. It was a hard moment for Ramon. He felt like making a break for the coconut grove again to mope by himself, but just then his mother caught his eye and smiled at him so trustingly he could n't possibly do anything but smile back at her. After the first smile, a second one came easier, and by the time the prizes were all given out and the crowd had left the hot room for the school yard, he was able to act almost as if his sister's triumph were his very own. He stood with

his father and mother while all their neighbors and friends crowded about to admire Rita's basket, and no one but his own family even guessed how disappointed he felt over his part in the exhibition.

While they were standing there, two American ladies from the Manila party came out of the schoolhouse, and one of them, seeing Rita, said to the other, "That 's the little girl that took the first prize." Then she held out her hand. "May I see your basket?" she said.

Rita handed it to her, and every one gazed at the strangers as they admired the workmanship and the beauty of the design.

"Think of her having done it all herself!" said the elder of the two ladies, as she turned the basket round and round in her hand. "I should like to take it home with me to show American children what fine work Filipino children can do all by themselves." She turned to Rita. "Would you be willing to sell me your basket?" she asked.



Rita gasped. The basket was her dearest possession. She loved it more than she loved anything in the world except her father and mother and Ramon. How could she bear to part with it? She put out a hand to seize it, then she thought of the rice-harvest and the fish-nets and how very much they needed money, and drew it back again. Still she did not speak.

"I will give you ten pesos for it," said the lady.

Ten pesos! To the little daughter of Felix Santos it was a fortune. She hugged her basket to her breast for an instant, then put it in the lady's hand.

The exhibition at the schoolhouse was only one of many festivities, and the crowd soon scattered to see what else was going on in the village, leaving the Santos family in the coconut grove.

When they were by themselves Rita thrust her prize money and her ten pesos into Felix's hand.

"Now you can buy the nets," she said, and hid her shining face in her mother's neck.

Felix looked at the money and his eyes filled with tears. Petra hugged her daughter and neither spoke for a moment. Ramon, feeling that he had been cheated out of his share in the rescue of the family fortunes, glared reproachfully at his rooster, and Dingo, seeing his master's dejection, crept to his side and licked his hand.

"If that fool rooster had n't gone and

spoiled it all, I should have had some money for you, too," said Ramon, winking very hard.

His mother smiled at him and, opening her arms, hugged both children at once. "Of course you would," she said. "I know that you wanted to help." Then she looked up at her husband, who was still standing turning the money over and over in his hands as if he could not believe that it was real and feared it might fly away again as suddenly as it had come.

"Don't you think we might buy back some of the rice now?" she said. "The boat can't have left the dock yet, for the ladies from Manila were here only a minute ago."

Felix came to life at once. "Jump up," he cried to Ramon, pointing to old Bobtail, and in another moment Ramon was on the carabao's back and the cart was rumbling down the street with Felix trotting beside it. Rita, her mother, and Dingo followed after it as fast as they could run.

Just as they reached the dock, the whistle of the steamer blew a fearful blast and people began hurrying to the gang-plank. Ramon saw visions of the bags of rice being carried away beyond all hope of recovery and, digging his heels into old Bobtail's side, made him fairly gallop along the dock.

Felix ran ahead and, dashing up the gangway, appeared a moment later on the dock, and the anxious group on the pier saw him arguing excitedly with the Captain. The sailors were already beginning to cast off the ropes, when he reappeared and came staggering down the swaying planks with a bag of rice on his back. He dropped it at Petra's feet and ran back again, returning a moment later carrying a second bag. Four times he made the trip while the deck-hands held the ropes, impatient to be gone. Then there was another hurried conference with the Captain, and, just as the gangway was about to be pulled in, he leaped across it for the last time and came

beaming and breathless to where his family stood waiting for him.

"The Captain didn't want to give up any of his cargo," he said, "but, with Rita's money and the price I got for the rice I sold, I have not only got back four bags, — enough for us, — but I have ordered all the things for the raft besides. The Captain will bring them on his next trip."

Then the wheels began to churn the water and the boat moved slowly out into the bay. The family stood still and watched it until it was far out on the blue waters. Then the bags were loaded on the cart and they turned back into the village street.

"Thanks be to God and the Holy Saints!" said Petra, crossing herself devoutly, as she mounted the cart. "Our troubles are now over."

"Thanks also to a good and clever daughter!" said Felix. "We now have rice enough to last until the next harvest and shall soon have a fishing-raft much better than the old one."

“ And Rita can make more baskets if she wants to, besides,” said Ramon.

Then Petra cried out: “ Upon my soul we are always forgetting something! We have forgotten Ramon’s rooster!”

They hurried back to the coconut grove and there left the cart beside the bamboo cage, and Dingo to guard both, and spent the rest of the afternoon blissfully in the shops.

When, a little later, Petra sold her embroidery, adding still more to the family purse, they felt so rich they bought new shoes all round, and a dress for Rita besides.

It was late when they left the shops, hugging their purchases in their arms, but the celebration was not yet over. They heard music in the square and, following the crowd, found a throng of people crowded about an open platform in the middle of the street. On the platform were three people acting out a play. The play was about a lovely princess who was held captive by a

wicked villain while a noble knight did his best to rescue her and slay her captor.

Round and round the princess the two knights circled and danced, thrusting at each other with their shiny swords and making up verses which they shouted at each other as they fought. When they ran out of verses, the princess came forward and told her story, and in between times the band played as if it meant to burst itself with music. They listened spellbound, until Felix nudged Petra and pointed to the sun. It was hanging like a great red balloon in the sky just above the hills of Bataan far across the bay. Slowly it sank until it seemed to rest on the sky-line, then it slipped down and down until there was nothing but a red glow in the sky to show where it had been.

The play ended with the going down of the sun, the crowd melted away in the gathering darkness, and Felix, Petra, and the children hurried back to the coconut grove, where old Bobtail, still hitched to the cart, patiently awaited them. Dingo came bound-

ing to meet them, barking a welcome, and soon the cart was creeping along on its homeward way. The harvest moon was high in the sky as they turned into the yard and the cart came to a stop beside the little nipa-thatched farm-house.

Petra sprang down and hastened indoors at once to set the pot boiling for their late supper and to light the taper before the household shrine. While Rita carried in the new shoes and her new dress and tenderly laid them away in the chest, Ramon set his rooster free, and Felix stored away the precious bags of rice. Then the cart was put back in its old place under the house, and Ramon, mounting Bobtail's back, took him away to the pasture. When he returned, a few moments later, with Dingo at his heels, the shell windows of the little house were bright with welcome, and from the open kitchen came the fragrance of boiling rice.







